



# Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program FY2016 Field Reviewer Handbook

**For additional information, contact:**

Sarah Fuller, Program Officer, [sfuller@imls.gov](mailto:sfuller@imls.gov)

Emily Reynolds, Program Officer, [ereynolds@imls.gov](mailto:ereynolds@imls.gov)

Sandra Toro, Senior Program Officer, [storo@imls.gov](mailto:storo@imls.gov)

Aly DesRochers, Program Specialist, [adesrochers@imls.gov](mailto:adesrochers@imls.gov)

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## Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a Laura Bush 21<sup>st</sup> Century Librarian (LB21) program reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the competitive categories of funding for libraries and archives.

The staff at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has prepared this handbook to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible proposals. It provides you with the procedural and technical information you need. Please use it in conjunction with this year's *Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Notice of Funding Opportunity* available on our website at: <https://www.imls.gov/nofo/laura-bush-21st-century-librarian-program-fy16-2-notice-funding-opportunity>.

Even if you have reviewed for other IMLS programs in the past, you should read through this booklet, since we make changes each year that may impact your reviews.

**We greatly appreciate the tremendous amount of time and effort you commit to being a reviewer. By participating in the peer review process, you make a significant contribution to the grant program and provide an invaluable service to the entire museum, archives, and library communities.**

**Thank you!**

## Purpose and Scope of the Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program

The Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program (LB21) supports professional development, graduate education and continuing education to help libraries and archives develop the human capital capacity they need to meet the changing learning and information needs of the American public.

This is the second of two FY16 LB21 funding opportunities with two separate deadlines. The first LB21 funding opportunity deadline was in October 2015, with an award announcement in late March 2016.

## Characteristics of Successful Projects

In addition to the LB21 categories listed below, we are especially interested in supporting proposals to address the following agency priorities:

- National digital platform
- Learning in libraries

We conducted a series of IMLS Focus convenings in 2015 that identified issues in the [National Digital Platform](#) and [Learning in Libraries](#) areas, among other topics. The reports, synthesizing key takeaways from this year's Focus convenings, may have been used by applicants during the proposal development process.

In particular, we wish to support academic programs, professional development and continuing education programs that address the issues raised at these convenings. These include:

- Digital services (content curation, user services, and infrastructure design & management)
- Participatory or lifelong learning services (maker spaces, learning labs, digital media studios, etc.)
- Community engagement, especially engagement that leads to broadband adoption
- Applied research that fosters meaningful connections among researchers, practitioners, and constituencies
- Mentorship, service learning, and practical models for development
- Supporting STEM learning
- Supporting projects that build capacity to embrace open-ended design challenges and proactive service developments.

## Funding categories and project categories

### Funding categories

The four LB21 funding categories are as follows:

**Project Grants** support fully developed projects for which needs assessments, collaboration development, feasibility analyses, prototyping, and other planning activities have been completed.

**Planning Grants** allow project teams to perform preliminary planning activities, such as analyzing needs and feasibility, solidifying collaboration, developing project work plans, or developing prototypes or proofs of concept. These activities should have the potential to lead to a full project, such as those described in Project Grants above.

**National Forum Grants** provide the opportunity to convene qualified groups of experts and key stakeholders to consider issues or challenges that are important to libraries or archives across the nation. Grant-supported meetings are expected to produce reports for wide dissemination with expert recommendations for action or research that address a key challenge identified in the proposal. The expert recommendations resulting from these meetings are intended to guide future applications to IMLS grant programs. National Forum Grant recipients are required at the end of the project to submit to us a brief whitepaper for public distribution summarizing those expert recommendations, which we will post online.

**Research Grants** support the investigation of key questions important to library or archival practice, including research to support the successful recruitment and education of the next generation of librarians. The term “research” includes systematic study directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. The term also includes activities involving the training of individuals in research techniques where such

activities utilize the same facilities as other research and development activities and where such activities are not included in the instruction function.

The award amount limitations for each funding category are as follows:

- Project Grants: \$50,000 - \$1,000,000
- Planning Grants: up to \$50,000
- National Forum Grants: up to \$100,000
- Research Grants: up to \$500,000

#### Project Categories

### 1. Masters-level and Doctoral-level Programs

#### *Master's Programs*

- Educate the next generation of librarians and archivists in nationally accredited graduate library programs to meet the evolving needs of the profession and society.

#### *Doctoral Programs*

- Develop faculty to educate the next generation of library and archives professionals. In particular, increase the number of students enrolled in doctoral programs that will prepare faculty to teach master's students who will work in school, public, academic, research, and special libraries and archives.
- Develop the next generation of library and archives leaders to assume positions as managers and administrators.

### 2. Research and Early Career Development

#### *Research*

- Investigate issues and trends affecting library and archival practices.
- For all research projects, except Early Career Development Projects, all eligible library entities may apply, either individually or collaboratively.

#### *Early Career Development*

- Support the early career development of new faculty members in library and information science by supporting innovative research by untenured, tenure-track faculty. (Proposed research should be in the investigator's own field of inquiry and need not relate to library education or librarianship as a career.)

We encourage internships and residency programs and are especially interested in increasing diversity in professional employment in libraries and archives developing a diverse workforce of librarians and archivists.

### 3. Continuing Education and Programs to Build Institutional Capacity

#### *Continuing Education*

- Improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of library and archives staff through programs of continuing education, both formal and informal, including post-master's programs such as certificates of advanced study, residencies, enhanced work experiences, and other training programs for professional staff.

#### *Programs to Build Institutional Capacity*

- Develop or enhance curricula within graduate schools of library and information science to better meet the needs of cultural heritage and information professionals.

- Broaden the library and information science curriculum by incorporating perspectives from other disciplines and fields of scholarship.
- Develop projects or programs of study to increase the abilities of future library and archives professionals in developing the 21st century skills of their users, including information and digital literacy skills. (See Museums, Libraries, and 21st Century Skills.)
- Only eligible graduate programs in Library and Information Science or School Library Media may apply to this category (see Article C: Eligibility).

Applicants may choose to submit a Project Grant, Planning Grant, National Forum Grant, or Research Grant proposal in any of the three LB21 project categories. Each application must designate one of these project categories. The same proposal may not be submitted to IMLS under more than one category.

## Application and Review Process

1. Applicants submit their preliminary proposals using Grants.gov by February 2, 2016.
2. IMLS receives the applications and checks them for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
3. IMLS identifies a pool of available Tier 1 reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each application. Tier 1 reviewers receive access to the preliminary proposals, evaluate them, and complete their reviews via Dropbox.
4. Tier 1 review panels meet in Washington, DC, to rank the proposals, discuss the merits of the proposals, and to provide recommendations and feedback for improvement of the preliminary proposals. IMLS uses Tier 1 reviewers' comments and feedback to create a list of proposals recommended for invitation to Tier 2 (review of full applications).
5. Invited institutions are provided reviewer comments and invited to speak with IMLS staff regarding their proposals. They are invited to make any changes to their proposals and submit full applications.
6. Applicants submit their full proposals using Grants.gov by June 1, 2016.
7. IMLS receives the full proposals and checks them again for organizational eligibility and application completeness.
8. IMLS identifies a pool of available Tier 2 reviewers with appropriate expertise and assigns reviewers to evaluate each application. Tier 2 reviewers receive access to the full applications, evaluate them, and complete their reviews and scores through the online reviewer system.
9. IMLS staff may hold phone calls to discuss scores and rankings with reviewers.
10. IMLS staff members review the financial/accounting information and the budget sheets of each potential grantee.
11. IMLS staff members provide a list of applications recommended for funding to the IMLS Director for approval. By law, the director has the authority to make final funding decisions.

## How Your Reviews Are Used

Your scores inform the ranking of proposals and are the basis for decisions about which proposals receive funding. Your work helps the Director and IMLS staff understand the strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. Your comments also help unsuccessful applicants revise their proposals for future grant cycles.

## General Review Information

### Verify access to proposals online

You will use two online systems:

- **Dropbox:** An online file sharing system used to download proposals and supporting materials. You do not need a Dropbox account to access proposals.
- **IMLS Online Reviewer System:** A system to enter your evaluative comments and scores for each proposal. See [Appendix III](#) and [Appendix IV](#) for additional information about this system.

You will be emailed links to both systems. Please alert IMLS staff immediately if any proposals are missing or cannot be opened.

### Time required

Experienced reviewers estimate that it takes two to three hours to evaluate one proposal. If you are a first time reviewer you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined on the following pages.

### Confidentiality

The information contained in grant proposals is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities, or any other information contained in the proposals. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning a proposal. Do not contact an applicant directly.

### Conflict of interest

Once you begin reviewing your assigned proposals, if you discover any previously unidentified potential conflict, contact us immediately. Please see the Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement included as [Appendix I](#) of this handbook. A conflict of interest would arise if you have a financial interest in whether or not the proposal is funded or if, for some reason, you feel that you cannot review it objectively.

### Required paperwork

You will receive via Dropbox a Peer Reviewer Services Agreement, a Direct Deposit Form, and a Conflict of Interest Statement and Certification. Please complete these forms and return them to your IMLS contact by the review deadline (Tuesday July 5, 2016).

### Managing records

Keep your proposals and a copy of your review sheets until December 1, 2016, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Please maintain confidentiality of all proposals that you review. After December 1, 2016, you may destroy the proposals and related materials. IMLS may instruct you to destroy your records at an earlier date, after the review and award process has concluded.

## Review Process

### Reading applications

Your thorough reading and understanding of each proposal will be the key to providing both insightful comments and an overall rating for the proposal, ensuring that your comments are a reflection of your overall score. Before you review proposals, please read the LB21 Notice of Funding Opportunity at <https://www.ims.gov/nofo/laura-bush-21st-century-librarian-program-fy16-2-notice-funding-opportunity>. If your assigned proposals reference the [National Digital Platform](#) or [Learning in Libraries](#) convening report, you may want to reference that as well.

### Review criteria

The IMLS Online Reviewer System will require you to provide summary evaluative comments for each of the review criteria. You will be asked to address the following areas in the Reviewer System:

1. Statement of Need
2. Impact Statement
3. Project Design
4. Diversity Plan (if applicable)
5. Project Resources
6. Communications Plan (not required for Planning Grants)
7. Sustainability (not required for Planning Grants, National Forum Grants, or Research Grants)
8. Application Overview

Review criteria for each section are outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. **Please see [Appendix II](#) for a complete list of these criteria.**

The Online Reviewer System will not allow you to submit blank comment fields. If a review section is not applicable to the proposal being reviewed, please note “This section is not relevant to this proposal,” or similar, in the system.

### Writing comments

Draft comments for each of the required comment areas. **We strongly recommend that you draft your comments using Word template provided via Dropbox, and then paste the comments into the Online Reviewer System form.**

- Use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- Judge the proposal on its own merits. Do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- If you question the accuracy of any information, call IMLS to discuss it. Do not question the applicant’s honesty or integrity in your written comments.
- Do not contact the applicant directly.
- Consider whether the applicant has the resources to successfully complete the project.

- *Analyze* the proposal in your comments. Summarizing or paraphrasing the applicant's own words will not help the applicant.

Characteristics of constructive and effective comments:

- Presented in a constructive manner
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the rating that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the proposal's strengths and identify areas for improvement

Characteristics of poor comments:

- Make derogatory remarks (Offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.)
- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money (An eligible institution may receive funds, regardless of institutional need.)
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials (If you believe a proposal is missing required materials, please contact an IMLS staff member immediately.)
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity (You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant, but if you are unsure how to frame your question, contact IMLS.)
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information (Your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.)
- Offer limited explanation or detail for the score provided

**Remember that both successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to help improve their projects or future proposals.**

#### Assigning scores

After you have read, evaluated and provided written comments, please provide a single numeric score for the proposal that reflects your opinion of the proposal's overall quality and your recommendation of whether it should be funded this year. A score of 3 or above is typically considered "fundable".

#### SCORE DEFINITIONS

- 5 – Excellent: For the highest quality applications.
- 4 – Very Good: For very strong applications with minor critiques.
- 3 – Good: For good applications with more significant critiques.
- 2 – Some Merit: For projects that can be revised and resubmitted by this applicant next year. Submissions are based on good ideas or address important issues.
- 1 – Do Not Fund: For projects that you do not want to see brought back. Proposals have major flaws that make them unfundable without major revisions or they have serious conceptual flaws.

*NOTE:* To help applicants understand and benefit from your reviews, make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments. **Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.** Adjust your scores, if necessary, to more accurately reflect your written evaluation.

#### Ranking proposals

Rank the proposals in order from most to least competitive. This information cannot be entered into the Online Reviewer System. Please send this list to your assigned Program Officer via email when you submit your comments and scores.

#### Submitting reviews

All Tier 2 reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to submit comments and scores for each application. *IMPORTANT:* Instructions and tips for using the Online Reviewer System are in [Appendix III](#) and [Appendix IV](#) of this handbook.

**For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please contact an IMLS program staff member directly. Please do not use the link on the Online Reviewer System page.**

Review your comments and scores. A review with even one missing comment or score cannot be accepted by the Online Reviewer System.

Once you have completed assigning scores and providing comments for each proposal assigned to you, we recommend that you keep a digital copy of your completed reviews until told to destroy it by IMLS. Then click on the submit box to send the entire review to IMLS. Following your submission, email your IMLS Program Officer to indicate your ranking of the proposals.

Once you submit your reviews, you cannot go back in to make revisions. If you feel you need to make a change, you must contact an IMLS staff member, and we will authorize your re-entry into the system. However, prior to submitting your reviews, you may repeatedly enter and exit the system without losing your information.

**The deadline to submit reviews via the Online Reviewer System is Tuesday July 5.**

## Appendix I: Reviewer Conflict of Interest Statement

As a reviewer or panelist for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), you may receive for review a grant application that could present a conflict of interest. Such a conflict could arise if you are involved with the applicant institution, or in the project described in the application, as a paid consultant or through other financial involvement. The same restrictions apply if your spouse or minor child is involved with the applicant institution or if the application is presented on behalf of an institution with which you, your spouse, or minor child is negotiating for future employment.

A present financial interest is not the only basis for conflict of interest. Through prior association as an employee or officer, you may have gained knowledge of the applicant that would preclude objective review of its application. Past employment (generally more than five years) does not by itself disqualify a reviewer so long as the circumstances of your association permit you to perform an objective review of the application. If you believe you may have a conflict of interest with any application assigned to you for review, please notify us immediately.

You may still serve as a reviewer even if your institution is an applicant in this grant cycle or you were involved in an application submitted in this grant cycle, as long as you do not review any application submitted by your own institution or any application in which you were involved. However, if you believe that these or any other existing circumstances may compromise your objectivity as a reviewer, please notify us immediately.

If an application presents no conflict of interest at the time you review it, a conflict of interest may still develop later on. Once you have reviewed an application, you should never represent the applicant in dealings with IMLS or another Federal agency concerning the application, or any grant that may result from it.

It is not appropriate, for your purposes or for the purposes of the institutions or organizations you represent, for you to make specific use of confidential information derived from individual applications that you read while you were serving as an IMLS reviewer. In addition, pending applications are confidential. Accordingly, you must obtain approval from IMLS before sharing any proposal information with anyone, whether for the purpose of obtaining expert advice on technical aspects of an application or for any reason.

**If you have any questions regarding conflict of interest, either in relation to a specific application or in general, please contact IMLS immediately.**

## Appendix II: Review Criteria Quick Reference

This table lists the criteria that should be considered in each section of your comments.

### **1. Statement of Need**

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- Evidence that the literature review includes relevant research and/or projects
- Evidence that the needs assessment clearly articulates the project audience and its needs
- Evidence that project activities and goals directly address the needs of the identified audience

### **2. Impact**

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- Evidence that the project will increase the number of qualified professionals for employment as librarians or archivists
- Evidence that the project will build greater skills and abilities to meet the needs of today's library and archives workforce
- Evidence that the project will contribute to results or products that can extend beyond a single institution to benefit multiple institutions and diverse constituencies
- Evidence that project outcomes will meet library service needs not only in the communities served but also be generalizable to libraries of similar size and type
- Evidence that the benefits of the project justify the costs
- Evidence that this project will transform practice (innovative approaches will be given high consideration)
- Strength of the proposed indicators as well as their target values (i.e. the targets you aim to reach)

### **3. Project Design**

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- Evidence of a cost-effective approach that will support a clear return on investment
- Evidence of sound project management principles that adequately address budget, timeline, and personnel
- Evidence that the project uses existing or emerging standards or best practices in the technical or disciplinary area to which the project relates
- Evidence of a sound evaluation plan that clearly explains how the project will be assessed, using methods and procedures that result in valid, reliable, and/or generalizable findings

### **Additional Review Criteria Specific to Early Career Development Proposals:**

- Evidence that the proposal clearly articulates research questions and adequately addresses timeline and personnel
- Evidence that methods chosen are the most appropriate for addressing the research questions that were posed based on the current scientific literature

**Additional Review Criteria Specific to Research Proposals:**

- What are the specific research questions this investigation will attempt to answer?
- What is the relevance of the proposed research for current practice?
- What research method(s) will be used to conduct the research?
- What type of data will be gathered?
- How will the data be analyzed?
- How will the information be reported?
- How will the research data be managed and made available for future use (as applicable)?

**4. Diversity Plan (if applicable)**

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- Evidence that the institution has the capacity to serve the identified diverse communities based on past performance or other relevant criteria
- Evidence of how, exactly, the identified diverse communities will benefit from the proposed project in ways that would not be possible without IMLS support
- Evidence that the proposed activities will serve the needs of diverse communities

**5. Project Resources: Personnel, Time, Budget**

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- Evidence that the applicant will complete the project activities in the time allocated through the effective deployment and management of resources, including personnel, money, facilities, equipment, and supplies
- Evidence of sound financial management coupled with an appropriate and cost-efficient budget
- Evidence that the applicant has the ability to meet any applicable cost share requirement
- Evidence that the project personnel have appropriate experience and expertise and will commit adequate time to accomplish project activities
- If the project includes collaborators, evidence that all are active contributors to the project activities

**6. Communications Plan (not required for Planning Grants)**

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- Evidence that the results, products, models, findings, processes, and benefits of this project will be communicated effectively to the library field and to other professional organizations and communities
- Evidence that communication activities will be ongoing throughout the project lifecycle rather than occur simply at the end of the project
- Evidence that the project will seek feedback from various stakeholders
- Evidence that the communities described in the Needs Assessment section can be reached and served through the proposed communications plan
- Evidence that the project will make every reasonable attempt to communicate lessons learned and the results of the project beyond standard professional audiences and communities of interest

## **7. Sustainability (not required for Planning Grants, National Forum Grants, or Research Grants)**

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- Evidence that the project's benefits have the potential to be sustained beyond the grant period
- Evidence that the project plan addresses issues of copyright and access on the course and course content during and after the grant period
- For projects involving distance education, evidence that there are plans for preservation and maintenance of course and course content during and after the grant period
- Evidence that the findings from research projects will inform practice and/or future research agendas

## **8. Application Overview**

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Any additional comments about your score or the proposal overall. Please make sure that your comments are aligned with your numeric score.

## Appendix III: How to Use the Online Reviewer System

All reviewers will use the IMLS Online Reviewer System to create and submit reviews. Below are the general steps for using the system. We recommend that you review these steps before you get started.

### Logging In

You will receive login information and a link to the Online Reviewer System from IMLS. Please contact IMLS staff if you need to have your password reset.

### Accessing the Online Reviewer System

- Once you have logged into the system, an **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**.
- After you have created a new password, your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications, click **VIEW**.
- Before you can begin to review any of the applications, you must complete a Conflict of Interest Statement. If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTERESTS STATEMENT** (bottom of page) and proceed. If you think that you may have a conflict of interest with an applicant, **do not** check the conflict box. Instead, contact an IMLS staff member.
- Now you are ready to begin. Simply click **REVIEW** beside any of the applications.

### Entering Comments and Scores

**We encourage you to record your comments in a Word document, and then cut and paste your text into the IMLS Online Reviewer System.**

- **Comments and Scores:** You must submit comments for each **Review Criterion** for each application. Be sure to save each set of comments by clicking **SAVE** before you move onto to the next criterion. You will only need to provide one overall numeric score for each application you are assigning to review. Click **Application Overview** to submit an overall score.
- Note: **Funding Priorities** does not apply. Please ignore this.
- Once you have completed an application review, click the **SAVE & CLOSE** box at the bottom of the screen. This will return you to the **Applications List** and allow you to choose another application to review.

### Revisiting the Online Reviewer System

- With your e-mail address and your new password, you will be able to re-enter the Online Reviewer System and complete or edit your reviews as often as you wish.
- Once you have logged in, the Security screen will appear again. Click **OK**.
- Once your review assignment appears, click **VIEW** in order to access the **Applications List** and proceed with the review process.

### Completing Your Online Reviews

- Once you have reviewed all applications assigned to you, the Application Review Status column should read **COMPLETE** beside each application.
- Please **PRINT** each review for your records.
- Once you have completed all your reviews, click **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** at the bottom of the screen.

### Online Reviewer System FAQs

This system was created several years ago with a Microsoft-based platform. While state-of-the-art at the time of development, it has not been updated. The system still works, but it can be frustrating at first. Once you have a few reviews underway it should prove an efficient process for managing and submitting your reviews. Below are some common user questions.

#### **Do any of the buttons for assistance work? What if I forget my password?**

No. Please contact IMLS staff for help if you need your password reset or have any other problems.

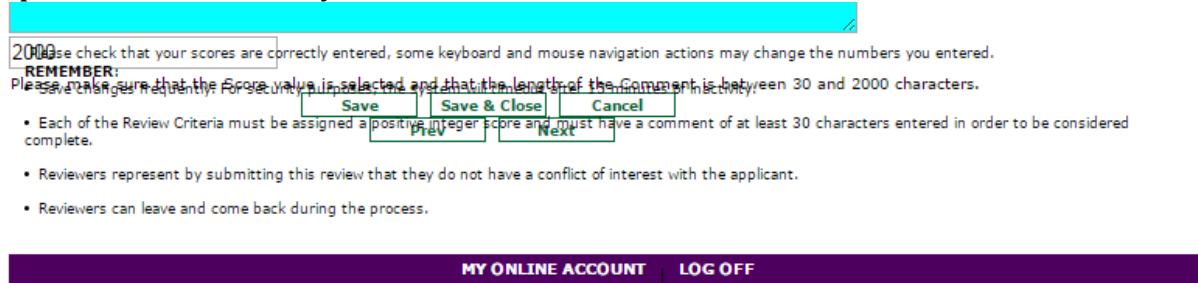
#### **What is the best way to get started or comfortable with the system?**

Shortly after receiving your packet, try logging into the system and entering some practice remarks to get a feel for the set up and information display. Then, as your deadline approaches, you can focus on the substance of your reviews rather than the process of entering information. Test out the system early and try to do it between 9:00am and 5:00pm so we are available to assist you.

***PLEASE NOTE: The system is unavailable Wednesday evenings from approximately 6pm to 10pm for maintenance.***

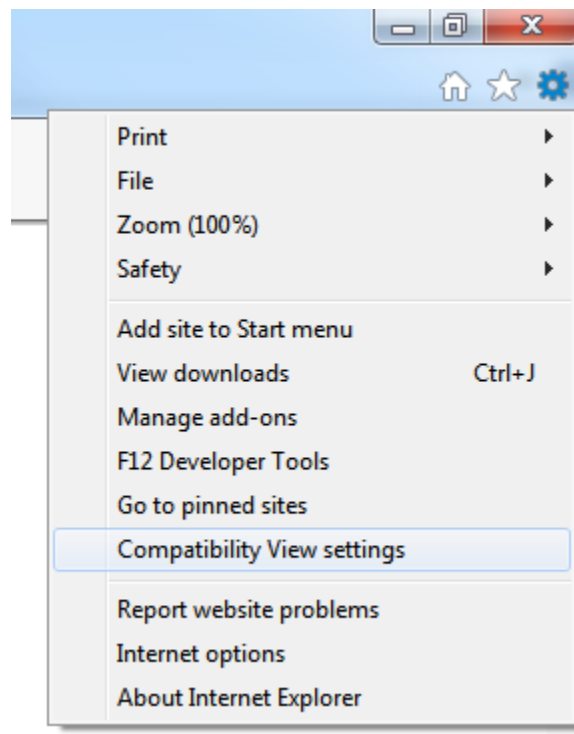
## Appendix IV: Online Reviewer System Troubleshooting

Many reviewers encounter an issue where the text displayed in the Online Reviewer System is superimposed on top of buttons or menus, making the buttons difficult or impossible to click. It may look like this:

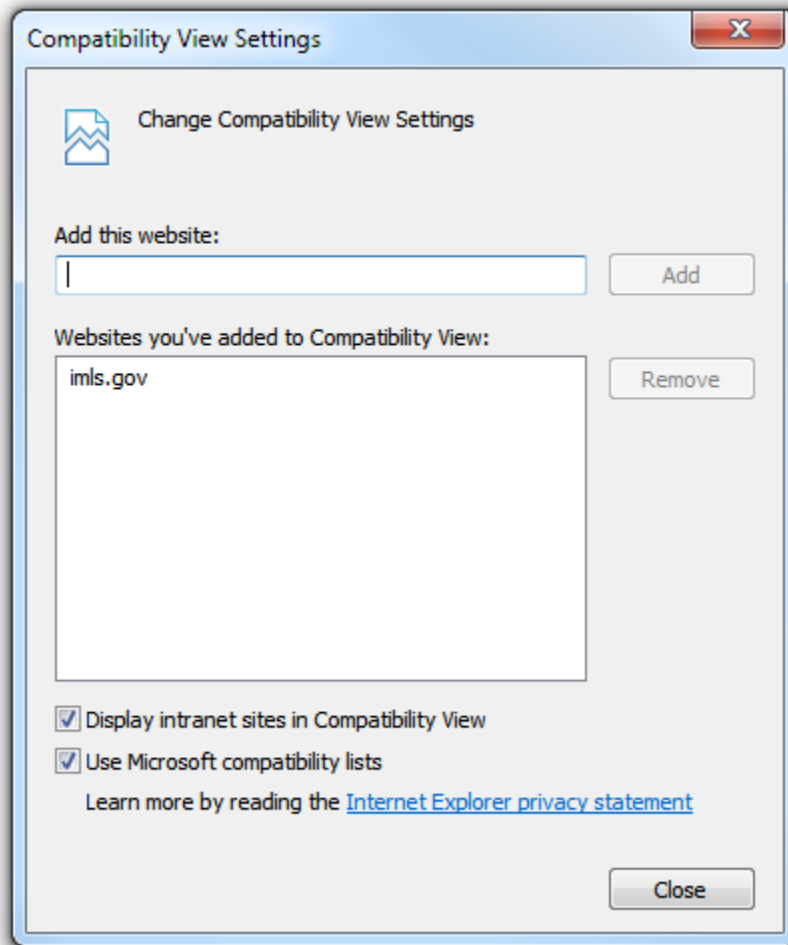


To resolve this issue, you must access the system **using Internet Explorer with Compatibility View (or Compatibility Mode) enabled**. In IE 11, this can be accomplished with the following steps:

1. Locate the Settings menu in the top right corner of the browser window and select *Compatibility View settings*.



2. Type "imls.gov" in the *Add this website:* dialogue box, then click *Add*.



If you are using another version of IE, please refer to help documentation for your version, or contact IMLS for assistance.